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C O N F I D E N T I A L KIEV 001160

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: UKRAINE/MOLDOVA/TRANSNISTRIA: RUSSIAN AID CONVOY,  
GOU PROPOSAL TO TEMPORARILY EASE CUSTOMS REGIME

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4(a,b,d).

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 6.

Maintaining the new customs regime  
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2. (C) Ambassador delivered ref A points on Ukraine's Transnistria-related customs proposal to Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk March 24. Tarasyuk asked whether we wanted the current border controls to change, to which Ambassador replied that we did not, that the current customs arrangement was acceptable and that it had taken a long time to reach this acceptable situation. Ambassador noted that Transnistria was essentially blockading itself. Tarasyuk said he understood. When Ambassador asked for more detail on Ukraine's plans, Tarasyuk repeated that he understood our position. (Discussion then turned to the March 26 Rada (parliament) and local elections -- septel.)

3. (C) Separately March 24, DCM delivered the Transnistria-related customs proposal points to MFA Second Territorial Department Deputy Director Ihor Prokopchuk. Prokopchuk thanked DCM for the nonpaper delivered earlier (ref B) and responded that Ukraine very much appreciated U.S. and EU support on the implementation of the customs regime and offered the clarification on the proposal that it pertained only to a small number of trucks trapped on Ukrainian territory at the time when the customs regime was introduced. Prokopchuk explained that about ten vehicles that had passed onto Ukrainian territory and been stopped were now blocking a checkpoint. Transnistrian authorities would not allow them to return, and the GOU proposal was intended as a one-time procedure relating only to those vehicles.

4. (C) Asked if the GOU had attempted to persuade Transnistrian authorities to allow the stranded trucks to return, Prokopchuk explained they had, but without significant results. He noted that the having the trucks stranded there served Transnistrian interests, impeded traffic, and created a negative atmosphere. DCM noted that Transnistria had created this problem and it would be helpful to push back. On the question of timing for this move, Prokopchuk responded that GOU was looking for a consensus and noted the measure had been discussed with, and received rather positively by, the OSCE head in Moldova.

5. (C) Comment: We are not certain what to make of Tarasyuk's response, but he seemed distracted, no doubt by the upcoming elections. In any case, we registered our opposition to the Ukrainian proposal, and will look to revisit this issue with Tarasyuk after the elections.

6. (C) Action request: Please advise how to respond to the GOU explanation that their proposal involved a one-time, specifically targeted relaxation of the rules instead of a more open-ended "temporary" move.

Russian humanitarian aid convoy making its way across Ukraine  
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7. (C) On March 24 DCM also delivered ref C points on Russian "humanitarian aid" to Transnistria. Prokopchuk assured DCM that there was never any question that the trucks would be allowed to pass. The trucks had arrived at the border without any documents and waited four hours until documents were sent over. About two hours after crossing the border, several trucks ran out of gas and spent two hours filling their tanks. During the course of seven hours they proceeded only 200 km despite the police escort provided to them. The convoy was close to Chernihiv during the afternoon and probably would be off Ukrainian territory by the end of the day. Prokopchuk noted that Russia only requested permission from Moldova for the goods to enter Moldovan territory after a GOU press conference called attention to the fact that Russia had not done so. He noted that the GOU was terming Russia's move a provocation and a politically motivated attempt to politicize the border regime, support the separatist forces, and influence the mood in the run-up to Ukraine's elections.

8. (U) Visit Embassy Kiev's classified website:  
[www.state.gov/p/eur/kiev](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/kiev).  
Herbst